

I. **Amendments to the Claims**

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

1. (Currently amended) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device ~~which is uncovered~~;

a collection plate or target tray; stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base, and said collar is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of said first sample processing device;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, and said second seal is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of said first sample processing device, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base.

2. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first sample preparation device is a multiwell filtration plate.

3. (Previously presented) The manifold assembly of claim 2, wherein said collection plate is a multiwell collection plate.

4. (Currently amended) The manifold assembly of claim 2, wherein said target tray is a MALDI target.
5. (Previously presented) The manifold of claim 1, wherein said collection plate is a removable support, and said first sample processing device comprises a plurality of wells, and the removable support comprises a plurality of openings and each opening is in register with a plurality of sample processing device wells.
6. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal is a gasket.
7. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said second seal is a gasket.
8. (Previously presented) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first seal allows for variability in the height of said first device and the collection plate or target tray.
9. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said collar has substantially vertical side walls, and wherein said first seal is created with a gasket positioned within said base, said sealing being along the substantially vertical side walls of said collar.
10. (Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein said first and second seal are a unitary seal.

11.(Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, further comprising a vacuum source, and wherein said base comprises a port for communication with said vacuum source.

12.(Original) The manifold assembly of claim 1, wherein the relative movement of said first and second devices of said integral stack unit is unaffected by the application of vacuum to said manifold.

13.(Previously presented) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base in sealing engagement with said collar, the base comprising an outer peripheral flange and a side wall which together form a peripheral groove and wherein a portion of a gasket contacts a slot formed in the collar;

a sample processing device positioned in sealing engagement with said collar and wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base.

14.(Original) The manifold assembly of claim 13, further comprising a removable support positioned below said sample processing device.

15.(Original) The manifold assembly of claim 13, wherein said sample processing device is a multiwell filtration plate.

16. (Currently amended) A method of applying vacuum to a manifold assembly, comprising:

providing a vacuum source;

providing a manifold comprising a base having a port for communication with said vacuum source, a collar, a first sample processing device and a second device stacked to form a sample processing unit;

positioning said sample processing unit between said base and said collar wherein said collar is positioned on the outer perimeter edge of said first sample processing device;

positioning said collar on said base; and

applying a vacuum to said manifold with said vacuum source, whereby said collar is forced into sealing engagement with said base without causing movement of said sample processing unit.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said first processing device is a filtration plate.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said sealing engagement between said collar and said base is adaptable to different sample processing unit stack heights.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein functional inserts are positionable in said base.

20.(Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a sample processing device.

21.(Original) The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a removable support.

22.(Previously presented) The method of claim 16, wherein said second device is a MALDI target.

23.(Previously presented) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device;

a second device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base;

a unitary seal between said collar and said base and between said first sample processing device and said collar.

24. (Previously presented) A manifold assembly comprising:

a collar;

a base;

a first sample processing device comprising a multiwell filtration plate or a single well filtration device;

a second device stacked below said first sample processing device to form an integral stacked unit preventing relative movement between said first and second devices, said stacked unit positioned between said collar and said base;

a first seal between said collar and said base; and

a second seal between said first sample processing device and said collar, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral portion of the base;

wherein the first sample processing device is seated recessed within the collar such that the top surface of the first sample processing device lies below the top surface of the collar.

25. (New) A manifold assembly comprising:

a base;

a collar having a top surface;

a first seal between said collar and said base;

a first sample processing device comprising a multiwell filtration plate
or a single well filtration device;

a second seal between said first sample processing device and the top
surface of said collar, wherein the collar comprises a skirt formed along a
bottom periphery of a lateral wall such that the skirt positions over a peripheral
portion of the base.

26. (New) The manifold of claim 25, further comprising a removable support located
between said first sample processing device and said collar.

27. (New) The manifold of claim 26, wherein said removable support comprises a
support grid.